

**ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMISSION**

**Tuesday, January 21, 2020**

**Monthly Meeting**

**Sister Cities Conference Room**

**City Hall**

**7:30 a.m.**

**Commission Members**

**Present:**

Charles Ablard, Historic Alexandria Foundation  
Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission  
Eldon Boes, Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission (EPC)  
John Bordner, Citizen, west of Washington St  
Rich Brune, Citizen, Park Planning District III  
Susan Cohen, Alexandria Commission for the Arts  
Robert Cvejanovich, Old Town Civic Association (OTCA)  
Beth Gross, Founders Park Community Association (FPCA)  
Charlotte Hall, Representative, VisitAlexandria  
Trae Lamond, Representative, Old Town Business and Professional Association (OTBPA)  
Mark Ludlow, Alexandria Archaeological Commission (AAC)  
Nathan (Nate) Macek, Alexandria Planning Commission, and Vice-Chair, Waterfront Commission  
Kleber (Skid) Masterson, Citizen, east of Washington St. and south of King St  
Danielle Romanetti, Representative, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce  
Mohamed E. "Mo" Seifeldein, Member, Alexandria City Council  
Kathy Seifert, Alexandria Seaport Foundation  
Stephen Thayer, Citizen, east of Washington St. and north of King St. and Chair  
Christa Watters, Citizen, east of Washington St. and north of Pendleton St.  
Patricia Webb, Park Planning District II

**Excused:**

Doug Gosnell, Representative, Alexandria Marina Pleasure Boat Owners

**Absent:**

Cheryl Ahearn, Citizen, Park Planning District I

**City Staff**

Jack Browand, Commission Staff Liaison, and Division Chief, Park Planning, Design & Capital Development, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)  
Jeff Farner, Deputy Director, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)  
Jim Hixon, Dockmaster, RPCA  
Catherine Miliaris, Principal Planner, P&Z  
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA  
Michael Simmons, Park Operations Manager, RPCA  
David Wooden, Urban Planner, P&Z

**Guests**

Christine Bernstein, resident  
Hal Hardaway, resident, Waterford Place HOA  
Marci Lash, resident  
David Martin, Gold Works  
Cathy Puskar, Walsh Colucci, Lubeley & Walsh  
Clair Sassin, Tall Ship Providence Foundation  
Scott Shaw, Alexandria Restaurant Partners (ARP)

**Call to Order** – Steve Thayer, Chair

Thayer called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

**Action Item: Approval of the December 17, 2019 minutes**

Hall moved and Macek seconded that Commissioners approve the December 17, 2019 minutes with one correction. The motion passed by voice vote.

**Presentations & Information**

**Presentation 1: 100 KING STREET PLAZA UPDATE (KING STREET PLACE)** - Jeff Farner, P&Z; David Wooden, P&Z; and Jack Browand,  
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/WCKingStUpdateJan2020.pdf>

Farner reported that the target date for launching the pilot is April 18, 2020 and reviewed highlights of the interdepartmental discussions and actions since the December meeting. He noted that there have been some modifications to the original plan. He said significant attention being given to concerns raised about loading and unloading for business operations and reported that comments received have been generally positive in meetings and surveys. Some businesses would like the block kept open to vehicles and other stakeholders support pedestrianization full-time rather than just on weekends.

Staff said options are being considered for how to facilitate deliveries to businesses and this will be evaluated during the pilot project. For example, there may be a short time period during weekend mornings when parking and loading can take place in the pedestrianized area. Adjustments will be made as needed.

***Meetings and Next Steps:*** By January 21, 2020 a public hearing had been held by the Transportation Commission and the Waterfront Commission and Old Town Business Association had been briefed. Next steps in January 2020 will include briefings to the Traffic and Parking Board on January 27 and City Council on January 28.

***Commission Discussion:***

- ***Business community outreach needs to be improved*** - King Street businesses in the nearby areas need to be consulted, not just those next to the pedestrian plaza. Hall noted that a number of businesses, including two restaurateurs in the unit block of King Street, had not yet been contacted about their concerns about the need to ensure vendors can access them for deliveries. She asked, on behalf of the Old Town Business Association and Chamber of Commerce, that the Commission not take a position on the proposal until businesses along King Street, Union and Lee Street have more opportunities to talk with City staff about their vendors' access.
- ***Loading/unloading for business deliveries-*** Commissioners recommended that the planned traffic changes be tested before the pilot period begins to verify that planned alternate routes will work as expected. For example, the plan needs to ensure delivery trucks can access the alternative streets designated for morning loading during pedestrianized times.
- ***Traffic & parking*** – Macek urged that parking spaces near the King/Union intersection be removed to improve driver visibility and make turning easier. Thayer said the City should ensure residents' unimpeded access to nearby homes such as those at the Torpedo Factory Condominiums. Baum urged that the plan's impact on residential parking in nearby neighborhoods be considered since it is already difficult.
- ***Respecting historic granite boulders as archaeological assets*** Ludlow urged the City to annotate the original locations of the granite boulders being considered for use in the plaza since they were

removed from an old historic warehouse foundation unearthed during the Robinson Terminal South site's excavation. Staff said the City plans to keep these unearthed boulders for use only within the Waterfront area.

- **Lighting & design** - In response to a suggestion that the plaza lighting be distinct from the City's holiday lights, staff said a variety of plaza lighting options are being considered and noted the King Street holiday lights will start being removed in June and be reinstalled in the fall.
- **Safety** – Cvejanovich recommended several design ideas at or near King/Union that could help maximize safety. They were raised when the Old Town Civic Association was briefed. He noted concerns about possible risks from drivers at King/Union being distracted by the pedestrian plaza and recommended that King Street be changed to one-way going west. He also noted concerns that pedestrianizing the 200 block of King Street could increase congestion if traffic moves from Union Street to Lee Street since Lee Street is more narrow.
- **Wayfinding signs** – It was recommended that signs be modified to make it easier for drivers to see their parking and other information.
- **King Street Trolley impact** – The importance of understanding how pedestrianizing the unit block will impact the King Street Trolley route and motor coach parking was emphasized.
- **Plaza seating** - Baum reported that the Park and Recreation Commission has taken the position that the plaza's outdoor seating should be open to the general public as is done with parks, and not be restricted to restaurant patrons.

#### **Public Comments**

- Christine Bernstein and Hal Hardaway said it is important to consider the project's potential impacts on residents in the nearby neighborhoods. Hardaway also suggested that millstones from the Alexandria Canal that are in Windmill Hill Park and Rivergate City Park could be used as benches.

#### **Presentation 2: RIVERFRONT TACO DSUP AMENDMENT- Scott Shaw and Cathy Puskar**

Alexandria Restaurant Partners has filed a request to amend its DSUP for its airstream-based restaurant located next to the Torpedo Factory in the City Marina. The amendment would let Riverfront Taco add ground-level outside music speakers and live acoustic entertainment to its seating area during its hours of operation, 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. There is outdoor seating for 90. Puskar said the request is consistent with the City's noise ordinance restrictions for the central business district and the Waterfront park and recreation zone. The applicant plans to meet with artists in the Torpedo Factory to hear any concerns about how the outside music might affect their studios. The Planning Commission is expected to consider its request at its March meeting. The staff recommendation on the ARP request should be finalized by the Commission's February meeting.

#### **Commission comments**

**Potential noise pollution** - Commissioners recognized that this is the central business district but some were concerned the proposed music would add to the area's existing noise level problems created by competing outdoor music from businesses and artists. It was noted that aggregate noise levels area already sometimes impact nearby residences on Union Street. Music comes from nearby buskers, the Blackwell Hitch restaurant and sometimes the Chart House. Cohen noted that artists in the Torpedo Factory are concerned that adding outside amplified music next to the Torpedo Factory could make it difficult for artists to discuss their art with visitors to their galleries. Scott Shaw, ARP owner, said the planned music would be soft background music and, on some days, an acoustic guitarist playing near the Torpedo Factory wall.

Commissioners asked staff to monitor noise levels consistently to ensure the aggregate music level in the Marina does not exceed noise ordinance limits. Staff said the noise levels will be monitored.

***Public Comments***

Hal Hardaway said nearby residents are concerned about aggregate noise levels in the area.

**Presentation 3: TALL SHIP PROVIDENCE - UPDATE ON PLANNED DOCK** – Clair Sassin, Tall Ship Providence Foundation, and Cathy Puskar  
<https://tallshipprovidence.org/>

The Tall Ship Providence Foundation has filed a request for an SUP that it hopes will be considered by the Planning Commission in March 2020 so that the Providence can begin operations in late spring 2020. Staff is discussing the request with the applicant. Additional information about the proposal will be provided at the Commission's March 2020 meeting.

The Providence is a reproduction of the original Providence commissioned in the late 1700s and brought to the City from New England by the Tall Ship Providence Foundation. In 1775 the original Providence became the first ship of the Continental Congress' navy and John Paul Jones' first command. Plans are for the tall ship Providence to provide both river cruises for hire and educational opportunities. The proposed location of the Providence's pier will be near the existing Seaport Foundation pier but the exact location is being discussed with City staff. The current proposed design would include a gangway, barge and two small cottages. Ship tours will review the original ship's history and include a multimedia presentation, "Birth of a Navy".

***Commission Comments:***

***Impact on existing Seaport Foundation pier*** – In response to Siefert's question, Browand said responsibility for dismantling the Seaport Foundation's existing pier near the proposed new pier's location is a question to be worked out by the Seaport Foundation and Tall Ship Providence Foundation since the City does not own the pier.

***Relation to the original plan for having a pier at the foot of King Street*** – In response to a question, Browand said the Olin plan's original landscape design for the Waterfront included building a pier at the end of King Street that could host historic ship visits as well as water taxis and other commercial activities, but currently no City funds are budgeted for that pier.

**City Updates**

**PUBLIC SAFETY** - No report.

**COMMUNITY PROJECT UPDATES – Jack Browand, Division Chief, RPCA**

- Browand introduced Michael Simmons – the RPCA manager responsible for all the City's waterfront parks.
- **Debris Mitigation Activities**  
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/WCDriftwoodJan2020.pdf>  
Shoreline cleanups have begun using the \$50,000 in the FY2020 budget designated for two shoreline cleanings, one in fall/winter 2020 and the other in spring 2020. Both cleanings will target the shoreline areas from Rivergate south to Windmill Hill Park. The first cleanup was between December 23, 2019 and January 10, 2020. Browand reviewed before and after cleanup photographs of the areas cleaned.

- **Water Taxi Amendment** – Council will consider the proposed amendment to the Potomac Riverboat Company’s Water Taxi operating license on February 11, 2020.<sup>1</sup> Thayer noted that the Commission had sent Council a letter in December supporting the proposal to let the Water Taxi’s operating hours begin as early as 6:30 a.m.<sup>2</sup>
- **Waterfront Park** – Landscape improvements that will integrate the old and new portions of the park are planned for the spring.
- **Windmill Hill Park** – The Request for Proposals for the Northern pier will be issued in the near future. The dog park drainage issue will be addressed in the spring.
- **2 King Street** – Following up on the Commission’s December 19, 2019 community meeting on potential future uses for this City-owned property across from Waterfront Park, the staff recommendation to Council is still being developed. The Commission will be briefed on the draft staff recommendation to Council when it is available, probably in March 2020.<sup>3</sup>

**PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT UPDATES** – Catherine Miliaras, Principal Planner, P&Z

- **Robinson Landing** – Completion dates for the various portions under construction were reviewed.
- **10 Duke Street** – A minor site plan amendment has been approved for work on the restaurant planned for the site.
- **Watermark Condominiums, 211 Strand** – Work on public improvements that will open up the alley/easement is moving forward. The likely completion date is March 2020.

**Commission Comments**

- In response to a question, Miliaras will find out if street closings will be needed for work at 10 Duke Street.
- In response to a question about what is being built at 115 S. Union Street, the old Birkenstock store building, Miliaras said it is being renovated for use as commercial space that will include a restaurant and garage.

**Liaison Reports**

**AD HOC MONITORING GROUP ON WATERFRONT CONSTRUCTION** - John Bordner, Chair  
*Meeting information is posted at:*

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/special/waterfront/default.aspx?id=82590>

- No meetings have been held since the December 2019 Commission meeting. Complaints related to construction worker parking will be considered at the following Monday’s meeting.

**RIVERRENEW SUBCOMMITTEE** – Skid Masterson & Christa Watters, Co-Chairs

*Meeting details are posted at:* <https://riverrenew.com/sag/>

Masterson reported that the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) has finished its work. A new SAG will be appointed for the RiverRenew project’s construction phase.

**Commissioner Announcements/Reports**

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<sup>1</sup> Commission’s November 19, 2019 water taxi briefing is at:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/WCWaterTaxi.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Commission’s December 31, 2019 letter to Council supporting the Water Taxi proposal is at

[file:///C:/Users/Hp-Owner/Documents/ALX%20WFC/2020\\_01\\_21%20WFC%20MTG/20-0437\\_Water%20Taxi%20Endorsement.pdf](file:///C:/Users/Hp-Owner/Documents/ALX%20WFC/2020_01_21%20WFC%20MTG/20-0437_Water%20Taxi%20Endorsement.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The November 2019 Commission briefing on 2 King Street is at:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/WC2KingST.pdf>

- **Beth Gross** thanked staff for how quickly Founders Park problems reported by residents were addressed.
- **Kathy Seifert** reported that the Alexandria Seaport Foundation (ASF) has submitted its request for a Special Use Permit (SUP) to build a second facility next to its current one. The facility will be used for its education and training programs. A public hearing on the request will probably be in April 2020.
- **Skid Masterson** proposed that the last remaining telephone poles on Union Street near Windmill Hill Park be removed after work on the current undergrounding of utilities on Union Street is completed. He recommended the Commission encourage Council to consider funding for this in the future. Browand noted that funding for undergrounding utilities along the Strand is included in the Flood Mitigation Project.
- **Next meeting** - Thayer announced that the next regular meeting is scheduled for February 18, 2020.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 a.m.